

Opening Statement

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Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science

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Hearing: ***Voting Machines - Will the New Standards and Guidelines
Help Prevent Future Problems?***

I want to welcome everyone to this afternoon's hearing and to welcome our House Administration colleagues to the Science Committee hearing room.

The development of new voting standards by NIST and the Election Administration Commission (EAC) was meant to improve the accuracy, reliability and integrity of our voting systems. However, the facts highlight that these updated guidelines may have little impact on the 2006 or even the 2008 elections.

According to a June 2006 GAO report, eleven states are still using the 1990 Federal Election Commission (FEC) standards which are known to be inadequate. Twenty-nine states are using the 2002 FEC standards which GAO has also found to be weak. Currently, only five states plan on using the new 2005 standards developed by the EAC and NIST during the 2006 elections. In addition, there are serious questions about the current testing procedures used to determine if voting equipment meets any standards. The current conformance testing is not transparent and results are not public. This issue needs to be addressed now.

While NIST has worked hard to develop new standards, the revised EAC/NIST standards will not go into effect until December 2007. For these new standards, transparent conformance tests still need to be developed. While these standards and test methods were being developed, states were already purchasing new voting equipment.

Will this new equipment meet the 2005 standards? At this time I don't think we know with any certainty.

We do know that there are questions about the security and integrity of direct recording electronic voting equipment. And some states have experienced significant problems with these voting systems.

Finally, if purchased equipment does not meet updated standards and conformance tests, we need to decide who will pay for equipment upgrades.

I don't have the answers to these questions, but we have a distinguished panel with a wide range of experience and views on this issue. I hope they can shed some light on the issues I've raised, and I look forward to their comments.